



Indonesia

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion. The Government officially recognized only six religions, and legal restrictions continued on certain types of religious activity.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice; however, ongoing government restrictions, particularly among unrecognized religions and sects of the recognized religions considered "deviant" were significant exceptions to respect for religious freedom. Since the previous reporting period the Government convicted and sentenced the leaders of a hardline Muslim organization to 18 months in prison, including time served, for their role in organized violence against a peaceful demonstration in support of religious freedom. The Government also prosecuted terrorists responsible for religiously tinged violence in Sulawesi and the Maluku. In some cases, however, the Government tolerated discrimination against and the abuse of religious groups by private actors and failed to punish perpetrators, although the Government prevented several vigilante actions during Ramadan. Aceh remained the only province authorized to implement Islamic law (Shari'a), although non-Muslims in the province are exempted from Shari'a. Many local governments outside of Aceh maintained laws with elements of Shari'a that abrogated certain rights of women and religious minorities; however, no new laws based on Shari'a were known to have passed during the reporting period. Even though the central Government holds authority over religious matters, it did not try to overturn any local laws that restricted rights guaranteed in the Constitution. Members of minority religious groups continued to experience some official discrimination in the form of administrative difficulties, often in the context of civil registration of marriages and births or the issuance of identity cards.

There were a number of reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Some groups used violence and intimidation to forcibly shut at least nine churches and 12 Ahmadiyya mosques. Some of the churches remained closed and one Ahmadiyya mosque in Riau that was completely destroyed had not been rebuilt. Other mosques were reopened. Many perpetrators of past abuse against religious minorities were not brought to justice.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with government and civil society leaders as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The Embassy promoted religious freedom and tolerance through exchanges and civil society development.

Section I. Religious Demography

An archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, the country has an area of approximately 700,000 square miles and a population of 245 million.

According to a 2000 census report, 88 percent of the population is Muslim, 6 percent Protestant, 3 percent Roman Catholic, 2 percent Hindu, and in total less than 1 percent Buddhist, followers of traditional indigenous religions, Jewish, and other Christian denominations. Some Christians, Hindus, and members of other minority religious groups argued that the census undercounted non-Muslims.

Most Muslims in the country are Sunni. The two largest Muslim social organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, claimed 40 million and 30 million Sunni followers, respectively. There are also an estimated 1 million to 3 million Shi'a.

Many smaller Muslim organizations exist, including approximately 400,000 persons who subscribe to the Ahmadiyya Qadiyani interpretation of Islam. A smaller group, known as Ahmadiyya Lahore, is also present. Other Islamic minorities include al-Qiyadah al-Islamiya, Darul Arqam, Jamaah Salamulla (Salamulla Congregation), and members of the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Institute.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that 19 million Protestants (referred to locally as Christians) and 8 million Catholics live in the country. The province of East Nusa Tenggara has the highest proportion of Catholics at 55 percent. The province of Papua contains the highest proportion of Protestants at 58 percent. Other areas, such as the Maluku Islands and North Sulawesi, host sizable Christian communities.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that 10 million Hindus live in the country. Hindus account for approximately 90 percent of the population in Bali. Hindu minorities (called "Keharingan") reside in Central and East Kalimantan, the city of Medan (North Sumatra), South and Central Sulawesi, and Lombok (West Nusa Tenggara). Hindu groups such as Hare Krishna and followers of the Indian spiritual leader Sai Baba are also present, although in smaller numbers. Some indigenous religious groups, including the "Naurus" on Seram Island in Maluku Province, incorporate Hindu and animist beliefs into their practices. Many have also adopted some Protestant principles. The Tamil community in Medan represents another concentration of Hindus.

The country has a small Sikh population, estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000. Sikhs reside primarily in Medan and Jakarta. Eight Sikh temples (gurdwaras) are located in North Sumatra, while Jakarta has two Sikh temples with active congregations.

Among Buddhists, approximately 60 percent follow the Mahayana school, Theravada followers account for 30 percent, and the remaining 10 percent belong to the Tantrayana, Tridharma, Kasogatan, Nichiren, or Maitreya schools. According to the Young Generation of Indonesian Buddhists, most believers live in Java, Bali, Lampung, West Kalimantan, and the Riau islands. Ethnic Chinese make up an estimated 60 percent of Buddhists.

The number of Confucians remains unknown because at the time of the 2000 national census, respondents were not allowed to identify themselves as such. The Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia (MATAKIN) estimated that ethnic Chinese made up 95 percent of Confucians with the balance mostly indigenous Javanese. Many Confucians also practiced Buddhism and Christianity.

An estimated 20 million persons in Java, Kalimantan, Papua, and elsewhere practice animism and other types of traditional belief systems termed "Aliran Kepercayaan." Many of these persons combine their beliefs with one of the government-recognized religions and are thus registered as following a recognized religion.

There are very small Jewish communities in Jakarta and Surabaya. The Baha'i community reported thousands of members, but no reliable figures were available. Falun Dafa, which considers itself a spiritual organization rather than a religion, claims between 2,000 and 3,000 followers, nearly half of whom live in Yogyakarta, Bali, and Medan.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and accords "all persons the right to worship according to their

own religion or belief." The Constitution states that "the nation is based upon belief in one supreme God." The first tenet of the country's national ideology, Pancasila, similarly declares belief in one God. Government employees must swear allegiance to the nation and to the Pancasila ideology. Other laws and policies placed some restrictions on certain types of religious activity, particularly among unrecognized religious groups and "deviant" sects of recognized religious groups. The Government did not use its constitutional authority to review or revoke local laws that violated freedom of religion.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs extends official status to six religious groups: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Unrecognized groups may register with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as social organizations. Although these groups have the right to establish a house of worship, obtain identity cards, and register marriages and births, they face administrative difficulties in doing so. In some cases these challenges make it more difficult for individuals to seek employment or enroll children in school.

In June 2008 the Government released a joint ministerial decree freezing the activities of the Ahmadiyya Qadiyani (Ahmadiyya), banning proselytizing by the Ahmadiyya, and prohibiting vigilantism against the group. The decree is short of the outright ban strongly advocated for by hardline groups and a government-appointed body, the Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society (Bakor Pakem). The decree was signed by the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Religion, and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Minister of Religious Affairs stated that violations of the ban on proselytizing would result in a maximum 5-year jail sentence on charges of blasphemy. The decree does not prohibit the Ahmadiyya from worshipping or continuing to practice within its own community.

Following the decree's release, the Government issued a joint circulatory letter providing the executive guidance on the joint ministerial decree on Ahmadiyya. The letter was signed by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Religion, the Assistant Attorney General for Intelligence, and the Director General for National Integration and Internal Politics at the Ministry of Home Affairs. The letter provides guidance for Governors, Regents, Mayors, Heads of the High Court, and Heads of Regional Offices under the Provincial Ministries of Religion throughout the country on proper implementation of the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB).

Prior to the government decree, Bakor Pakem issued a recommendation to the Government to dissolve the Ahmadiyya. The April 2008 recommendation declared the group heretical and deviant, citing a 1965 presidential instruction on the "prevention of misuse and disgrace of religion." The Government delayed action on issuing a formal decree against the group amid pressure from civil society and Islamic organizations that claim the ban would be unconstitutional and contrary to the teachings of Islam.

The Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) released a number of fatwas (religious decrees) in recent years on the issue of "deviance" from mainstream Islam, including recommendations to ban the Ahmadiyya, that were influential in enabling official and social discrimination against the Ahmadiyya and other minority religious groups during the reporting period.

The Government formed the MUI in 1975 and continued to fund its members, but MUI opinions are not legally binding. Nevertheless, the MUI's edicts or fatwas are designed to be moral guiding principles for Muslims and society, and the Government seriously considers them when making decisions or drafting legislation. MUI's influence in restricting religious freedoms increased during the year, sometimes with government support.

In 2007 MUI issued a fatwa with 10 guidelines for determining deviant teachings. These include disagreeing with any of the six core principles of Islam; acknowledging a prophet after Muhammad; and changing or modifying Islamic rituals such as performing the Hajj to a place other than Mecca or saying that prayer five times daily is not necessary. In October 2007 the MUI declared the minority sect, al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah deviant. It issued a similar fatwa against the Ahmadiyya in 2005.

The 2006 civil registration bill requires citizens to identify their religion on National Identity Cards (KTP). The bill does not allow citizens to identify themselves as anything outside of the six recognized religious groups. Legally, citizens may leave the religious section blank, but some local government officials were not familiar with this option. Members of unrecognized religious groups were often unable to obtain KTPs as a result.

The Government requires officially recognized religious groups to comply with Ministry of Religious Affairs and other ministerial directives, such as the Revised Joint Ministerial Decree on the Construction of Houses of Worship (2006), Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia (1978), and Guidelines for the Propagation of Religion (1978).

The 2006 Revised Joint Ministerial Decree on the Construction of Houses of Worship requires religious groups that want to build a house of worship to obtain the signatures of at least 90 members of the group and 60 persons of other religious groups in the community stating that they support the construction. The decree also requires obtaining approval from the local religious affairs office, the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB).

The Guidelines for Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions require domestic religious organizations to obtain approval from the Ministry of Religion to receive funding from overseas donors. The Guidelines for Propagation of Religion ban proselytizing under most circumstances.

The Government permits the practice of the traditional belief system of Aliran Kepercayaan as a cultural manifestation, not a religion. Aliran Kepercayaan groups must register with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Local authorities generally respect these adherents' right to practice. On June 28, 2007, the Government issued Regulation No. 37/2007, which allows Aliran Kepercayaan officials to preside over marriage ceremonies and directs civil registration offices to register marriage licenses signed by such marriage officials, enabling these marriages to be legally recognized. The regulation was not implemented in all areas, however. At the end of the reporting period, the Surabaya Citizenship Department was waiting for either revision of the local regulation on civil administration and marriage or technical guidance from the Minister of Home Affairs before implementing the law.

The Child Protection Act of 2002 makes attempting to convert minors to a religion other than their own through "tricks" and/or "lies" a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.

Article 156 of the Criminal Code makes spreading hatred, heresy, and blasphemy punishable by up to five years in prison. Although the law applies to all officially recognized religions, the few cases in which it has been enforced have almost always involved blasphemy and heresy against Islam.

Many of the country's policies concerning religion are enacted and enforced at the subnational level. Since October 2005 the regional representative office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in West Nusa Tenggara upheld a ban on 13 religious groups, including the Ahmadiyya, Jehovah's Witness, Hare Krishna, and 10 forms of Aliran Kepercayaan as being deviations of Islam, Christianity, or Hinduism. The West Nusa Tenggara Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society closely monitored Ahmadiyya members in Mataram during the reporting period. There were no reports, however, on how the restriction affects the other banned groups in the region. In West Java a joint decree issued in January 2005 in the Kuningan Regency restricts the propagation of Ahmadiyya teachings. On May 5, 2008, Pakem West Java recommended municipal authorities ban Ahmadiyya. On May 6, 2008, the Mayor of Cimahi, West Java, issued an order banning the religious group.

Aceh remained the only province for which the central Government specifically authorized Shari'a law. Presidential Decree 11/2003 formally implemented Shari'a law and established Shari'a courts in Aceh. Since that time the provincial government has passed three Shari'a laws, one governing relations between members of the opposite sex, and two others to ban alcohol consumption and gambling. Christians and other non-Muslims are specifically exempted. By 2008 many districts had disbanded the vice patrols, better known as Wilayatul Hisbah (WH) which

were originally established in 2005 in districts around the province. A new provincial government was installed in early 2007 and has steadily cut back on the enforcement of Shari'a law. Even in areas where the WH continued to operate, their influence was substantially less because of new regulations limiting their authority.

Although not specifically classified as Shari'a ordinances, many local governments across the country follow Shari'a as the inspiration for their ordinances. According to the Indonesian Women's Coalition, local governments throughout the country have issued at least 100 such ordinances. Many Muslim scholars and human rights activists claim that these ordinances create or increase discrimination against women. In many cases these laws require Muslim women to wear headscarves in public; mandate elected Muslim officials, students, civil servants, and individuals seeking marriage licenses to be able to read the Qur'an in Arabic; and prohibit Muslims from drinking alcohol and gambling. Some of these laws are attempts to deal with local social problems, and in many cases the laws are not enforced.

Civil rights activists assert that Shari'a-based ordinances violate the Constitution and have called on the Government to exercise its constitutional jurisdiction to revoke or review these ordinances. In February 2008 the Minister of Home Affairs claimed Shari'a bylaws do not exist and that the so-called Shari'a-inspired ordinances are merely public order laws passed to deal with social problems such as drinking and prostitution. With regard to Aceh, the Minister stated that the disputed regulations only applied to Muslims, obliging them to conduct their daily lives in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Several local governments maintain regulations preventing Muslim women from receiving government services if they are not wearing headscarves, although they are not enforced.

Several regencies in South Sulawesi have Shari'a laws on the books. In Bulukumba Regency, the laws, which apply only to Muslims, include obligatory Islamic dress, a requirement to read the Qur'an in Arabic, regulations on tithing, and a ban on liquor. In most cases there are no sanctions for noncompliance, and the laws are not enforced.

A 2002 regulation in the Pamekasan Regency of Madura, called Gerbang Salamor Islamic Society Development Movement, calls for Muslim civil servants to wear Islamic attire and the cessation of both public and work activities during the call to prayer. The regulation was issued following requests from the Pamekasan clerics to encourage Muslims to implement Islamic values in daily life. Reportedly, however, not all residents obey this regulation, and there are no clear sanctions for noncompliance.

Tangerang City in Banten Province bans prostitution and public displays of affection. These bans apply to both Muslims and non-Muslims. The controversial prostitution clause vaguely defines a prostitute as anyone drawing suspicion based on his or her attitude, behavior, or dress, and places the burden on suspected women to prove their innocence. However, the ban is no longer implemented, according to rights activists.

The 1974 Marriage Law makes polygamy illegal for civil servants, except in limited circumstances. Marriage law for Muslims draws from Shari'a and allows a man to have up to four wives, provided he is able to support each equally. For a man to take a second, third, or fourth wife, he must obtain court permission and the consent of the first wife; however, these conditions are not always required in practice. Many women reportedly encounter societal pressures that make permission difficult to refuse, and Islamic women's groups remain divided over whether the system needs revision. In October 2007 the Constitutional Court upheld a spouse's right to deny a husband's demand to take on additional wives, ruling that restrictions on polygamy in the Marriage Law violate neither the Constitution nor tenets of Islam and are necessary to protect the rights of women.

The President signed the antipornography legislation into law on December 8, 2008. The bill outlaws pornographic acts and images, broadly defining pornography as "man-made sexual materials in the form of drawings, sketches,

illustrations, photographs, text, voice, sound, moving pictures, animation, cartoons, poetry, conversations, and gestures." It also outlaws public performances which could "incite sexual desire." Some provinces refuse to implement the antipornography law on grounds that it limits religious and cultural expression. Currently, the Constitutional Court is reviewing the law after a coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) challenged its constitutionality.

Divorce remains a legal option available to members of all religions, but Muslims seeking divorce generally have to turn to the Islam-based family court system while non-Muslims obtain a divorce through the national court system. In divorce cases women often bear a heavier evidentiary burden than men, especially in the Islam-based family court system. The law requires the former husband to provide alimony or its equivalent, but no enforcement mechanism exists, and divorced women rarely receive such support.

Based on Law 17/1999, the Government has a monopoly on organizing the Hajj to Mecca. The law states that the Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for providing guidance, service, and protection to Hajj pilgrims during their pilgrimage. The Ministry also determines the costs associated with the Hajj and issues a Hajj passport.

In April 2008 the House of Representatives passed a bill reaffirming the Government's role as the single Hajj organizer. Despite many complaints from various sides about alleged corruption, poor management, and inadequate service, the new law states the Ministry of Religious Affairs will continue to manage the pilgrimage. The law requires the Government to form an independent supervisory committee to monitor the Hajj management. The Indonesian Hajj Supervisory Committee would consist of nine members--three government officials and the remaining six from other institutions, including the MUI. The three government officials on the committee would be comprised of members from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Health Ministry, and the Indonesian Embassy in Saudi Arabia.

In 2007 the President signed the National Education Law, originally passed by the Government in 2003. The Education Law mandates religious instruction in any one of the six official religions when requested by a student.

The Government bans proselytizing, arguing that such activity, especially in religiously diverse areas, could prove disruptive.

Religious speeches are permissible if they are delivered to members of the same religious group and are not intended to convert persons of other religious groups.

Televised religious programming remains unrestricted, and viewers can watch religious programs offered by any of the recognized religious groups.

No restrictions exist on the publication of religious materials or the use of religious symbols; however, the Government bans dissemination of these materials to persons of other religious groups.

Religious groups and social organizations must obtain permits to hold religious concerts or other public events. The Government usually grants permits in an unbiased manner unless a concern exists that the activity could anger members of another religious group in the area.

Foreign missionaries must obtain religious worker visas, and foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, or financial) to local religious groups.

The law does not discriminate against any religious group in employment, housing, or health care.

The Government observes the Ascension of the Prophet, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the Muslim New Year, Good Friday, the Ascension of Christ, the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Christmas, the Buddhist holiday Waisak, the Chinese New Year (celebrated by Confucians and other Chinese), and the Hindu holiday Nyepi as national holidays. Additional Hindu holy days are recognized as regional holidays in Bali, and Balinese do not work on Saraswati Day, Galungan, and Kuningan.

During the reporting period, several government officials and prominent political leaders interacted in public forums and seminars with religious leaders and interfaith groups such as Muhammadiyah's International Peace Forum and various seminars sponsored by the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), and the Wahid Institute.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom; however, a government decree restricting the ability of the Ahmadiyya to practice freely was a significant exception. Certain other laws, policies, and official actions also restricted religious freedom and the Government sometimes tolerated private actors' discrimination against and abuse of individuals based on their religious belief.

Local governments issued bans against Ahmadiyya, al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah, and other minority Islamic sects during the reporting period and monitored them closely, frequently at the request of local MUI chapters.

In September 2008 the acting Governor of South Sumatra issued a governor's decree banning Ahmadiyya. The decree stated that "the Ahmadiyya would be prohibited in the province because the sect is not compatible with Islamic teachings." The local ban was supported by officials from the provincial offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, local prosecutors, representatives from the local MUI and other Islamic organizations, including academics from Palembang-based Raden Fatah State Islamic Institute. Before the ban, several conservative groups under the umbrella organization Islamic People's Forum (FUI), including the Islam Defenders Front (FPI) and the Indonesian Mujahidin Council, along with Hizbuth Tahrir Indonesia, a transnational organization, demanded the dissolution of the Ahmadiyya sect.

Despite the South Sumatra decree's violation of the June 2008 central Government decree and guidance on Ahmadiyya, the central Government has taken no action to demand it be rescinded. The decree remains in place, but no efforts have been made to enforce it and local authorities consider that the decree has no force of law, given that the acting Governor was only in power for three months. The Ahmadiyya community reports that it is still able to perform its usual and normal religious activities in the province.

The June 2008, government decree on Ahmadiyya that bans proselytizing and practices deemed to be "deviant" from mainstream Islam came five months after a government-appointed team began monitoring the Ahmadiyya at the request of MUI. Civil society activists have said that passage of the decree was the most recent example of an escalating effort by Islamic hardliners to restrict the practice of the Ahmadiyya.

Other religious minorities also faced restrictions during the reporting period. In February 2009 the local Indonesian Ulema Council in Jombang (MUI) declared that "Noto Ati" (or managing heart) teachings are heretical because they violate the teachings of the Koran and Hadith and because the group believed that the end of the world would come on January 15, 2009. The MUI in Blitar, East Java, banned six such "heretical" teachings over the past eight years that instructed its followers to pay \$400 (4 million rupiah) for a ticket to heaven. However, the leader of the "road to heaven" teachings, Suliani, argued that the \$400 was a compensation for her prayer and advice to her followers.

On May 7, 2009, members of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP) congregation filed a lawsuit and appealed to the Bandung State Administrative Court to cancel a municipal order revoking their church permit. Although the

congregation obtained a permit and began construction, the mayor revoked the permit on March 27, 2009, citing residential complaints. During construction, there were several unresolved attacks on the HKBP church, including one in October 2008.

In Bukittinggi a ban on the celebration of Valentine's Day in public venues such as hotels and restaurants remained in place. The ban was originally issued by the mayor in February 2008 because officials felt that Valentine's Day was a Western tradition not compatible with Indonesian culture.

The civil registration system discriminates against persons who do not belong to one of the six recognized religious groups. Animists, Baha'i, and members of other small minority religious groups found it difficult to register births or marriages, notwithstanding the June 2007 regulation pertaining to marriage and civil administration, which allowed Aliran Kepercayaan marriages to be officially recognized. According to the Trimulya Foundation, an NGO that advocates for rights of Aliran Kepercayaan followers, adherents were sometimes unable to register marriages.

Men and women of different religions also continued to face obstacles to marrying and officially registering their marriages. Such couples had difficulty finding a religious official willing to perform the ceremony, which is required before registering a marriage. As a result, some persons converted in order to marry. Others traveled overseas, where they wed and then registered the marriage at an Indonesian embassy. Despite being among the officially recognized religious groups, Hindus stated that they frequently had to travel long distances to have their marriages registered, because in many rural areas the local government could not or would not perform the registration.

In practice couples prevented from registering their marriage or the birth of a child sometimes converted to one of the recognized religions or misrepresented them as belonging to one of the six. Those who chose not to register their marriages or births risked future difficulties, such as an inability to obtain birth certificates for children. Birth certificates are required for school enrollment, scholarships, and government employment.

Human rights groups continued to receive sporadic reports of local civil registry officials who rejected applications for identity cards (KTPs) submitted by members of unrecognized or minority religious groups. Some applicants found it easier to register with a religion other than their own and were issued KTPs that inaccurately reflected their religion. For example, some animists received KTPs that listed their religion as Islam. Many Sikhs were registered as Hindu on their KTPs and marriage certificates. Similarly, many Jews registered as Christians. Some citizens without a KTP had difficulty finding work. Several NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the Government to delete the religion category from the KTPs, but no progress was made.

Ahmadiyya followers forced from their homes in West Lombok by a mob in 2006 and living in the Transito Camp in Mataram continued to face difficulty obtaining KTPs due to the absence of a clear home address while displaced in the camp. As a result, The Ahmadiyya sometimes could not get free health services from hospitals as local officials refused to issue notification letters regarding their poor condition. The Ahmadiyya believed that they could obtain KTPs and resolve the issue if they could return to their home village.

In June 2008 in the Solok district of West Sumatra, local officials refused to perform marriage ceremonies for members of the Ahmadiyya sect. However, with the assistance of the local village head, individuals from the Solok district were able to marry in a different district and have not faced problems since their return.

Since the Government promulgated the Revised Joint Ministerial Decree on the Construction of Houses of Worship in 2006, implementation and defense of rights conferred under the decree have not always been enforced at the local level. During the reporting period, some Christian and Hindu groups pointed to sporadic acts of discrimination in which local authorities refused to authorize the building of churches and temples even though the groups managed to collect the necessary signatures.

In the regency of Langkat, North Sumatra, local authorities delayed Catholic leaders from building a church, despite the leaders having met the legal requirements to do so. The issue was ultimately solved through mediation with the FKUB. While local FKUBs are designed to serve as interfaith forums, they were often dominated by the majority religious group, which could oppose or stall provision of licenses to minority groups. In several cases in West Java, small churches faced difficulties obtaining licenses, frequently due to opposition in the FKUB.

During the reporting period, the Hindu Association reported that it has been permitted to build a temple in Tangerang, West Java. Initially there was opposition from the community despite the association having obtained the required signatures. However, due to lack of funding, the temple has not yet been built.

In 2007 the local government cancelled the permit for the construction of a Hindu temple in Pura Penataran Agung Rinjani, Bayan District, West Lombok. The officials cancelled the permit because the temple administrator was building a new and larger temple instead of renovating the existing one as requested in the permit. The construction was stopped when it reached 25 percent of completion. During the reporting period, construction was still suspended and no new permit request was submitted.

In January 2008 hundreds of protesters from the majority Muslim Sasak community attacked a Hindu temple in Pura Sangkareang, Keru, West Lombok, causing minor damage and halting renovations. Although the police made some arrests, the protesters were released shortly thereafter. Citing differing interpretations on building permits, some local officials believed the temple administrators required a permit and agreement from the local community prior to beginning renovation work. Temple administrators assumed that renovations, unlike construction, could proceed without approval from municipal authorities and local residents. Temple authorities have since applied for the appropriate permits and at the end of the reporting period their application was being reviewed by the national-level Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Religion. Currently, the temple is being used for religious services.

In Aceh, efforts to educate the public about, and enforce, Shari'a law continued, albeit at a much lower level of intensity than in years past. Not all local governments in Aceh have dedicated Shari'a police, and some have disbanded them. All districts have Shari'a offices, although local commitments to implement Shari'a vary by community. During Ramadan several districts, including Banda Aceh, issued regulations ordering shopkeepers to close their businesses for midday prayers, and for restaurants to remain closed all day. Not all businesses and restaurants complied with these regulations. Throughout the reporting period, the Shari'a office and religious police worked jointly with the civil police to investigate and prosecute violations. At times the Shari'a police publicly lectured persons caught wearing improper Islamic dress in public or dating without an escort, but in these cases police generally did not arrest or charge them with crimes. Unlike previous reporting periods, there were no reports of any roadblocks to confirm whether passersby were wearing Islamic attire.

During the reporting period in Padang, West Sumatra, the mayor instructed all Muslim students to wear Islamic dress on Fridays and encouraged Muslim city officials to do so as well. Many, however, did not comply, and there was no penalty for noncompliance.

Some Christian groups state that Christian missionaries found it difficult to obtain or extend visas. Requirements for religious worker visas are more onerous than for other visa categories. In addition to requiring approval from each office of the Department of Religion from the local to national level, such extensions also require information on the number of followers of the religion in the community, and a statement by the applicant confirming that the applicant would work no more than two years in the country before being replaced by a local citizen. Foreign missionaries granted such visas worked relatively unimpeded. Many missionaries with a primary focus on development work successfully registered for social visas with the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education.

As in previous reporting periods, during the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, many local governments ordered

either the closure or a reduction in operating hours of various entertainment establishments. Several regional governments, including those of the cities of Palembang, Cilegon, Semarang and Makassar, issued a circular limiting the operating hours of night entertainment venues, cafes and restaurants during the month of Ramadan in 2008. The city administration of Tangerang also reportedly sealed ten cafes for not abiding by the local regulation.

Shortly before Ramadan 2008, Surabaya city government officials, social leaders, religious leaders, and businessmen signed a joint agreement not to operate nighttime entertainment during the fasting month. Similar regulations were applied in Jakarta and other parts of Indonesia. Regional governments, city administrations, and hardline groups sometimes employed force in enforcing these regulations, although in many cases police prevented vigilante groups from taking action. Some members of minority religious groups, as well as some Muslims, believed these orders infringed on their rights.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the reporting period, the Government continued to explicitly and implicitly restrict the religious freedom of groups associated with forms of Islam viewed as outside the mainstream.

The Government tolerated discrimination and abuse toward the Ahmadiyya by remaining silent on the 2007 MUI fatwa containing guidelines condemning Islamic groups such as the Ahmadiyya, who profess belief in a prophet after Muhammad. The Government also remained silent on the 2005 MUI fatwa that explicitly banned the Ahmadiyya, as well as local government bans. Varying reports provided different numbers of mosques attacked or closed. However, according to national Ahmadiyya spokespersons, since the June 2008 decree, 21 Ahmadiyya mosques were forced to close around the country; 15 were closed in West Java alone. The June 2008 joint ministerial decree on the Ahmadiyya responded to calls to restrict the group's rights. For the most part, Ahmadiyya followers were allowed to continue worshiping, although some mosques were closed after the decree. However, because of the decree, Ahmadiyya followers were not free to proselytize or otherwise practice their faith publicly.

Authorities failed to halt vandalism on a number of Ahmadiyya facilities during the reporting period.

On June 2, 2009, a mosque belonging to Ahmadiyya members in Kebayoran Lama, South Jakarta, was deliberately set on fire by unidentified arsonists during dawn prayers. Witnesses told police that eight Ahmadiyya members were performing the dawn prayer on the second floor of the two-story building when two men sprayed the mosque with gasoline from a jerry can and lit the fire. There were no injuries in the incident and no arrests were made.

On April 19, 2009 a group of unidentified persons reportedly vandalized the Mahmud mosque in Talaga village. One hundred and fifty residents had sealed the same mosque in July 2008. Also, in July 2008, they sealed the Taher mosque in neighboring Sindankerta village, Cianjur, West Java.

On October 5, 2009, a group of people destroyed the Mubarak mosque in Mahato area, Tanjung Medan village, Pujud District, Rokan Hilir Regency, Riau Province, after the Eid al-Fitr celebration.

On August 27, 2008, hundreds of FPI members threatened the Ahmadiyya congregants of Al Mubarak mosque in Jagakarsa, South Jakarta, and demanded they cease all of their activities before the month of Ramadan.

Members of Ciputat Muslim Community Forum (FMCC) sealed the Baitul Qoyyum mosque belonging to Ahmadiyya on August 19. The FMCC believed that Ahmadiyya members had failed to abide by a joint ministerial decree released in June that banned the group from proselytizing. Police thwarted the residents' attempt to seal the mosque.

On August 8, 2008, local residents vandalized Baiturahman and Baitol Do'a mosques in Parakansalak, Sukabumi, West Java.

A group of hardliners sealed a small Ahmadiyya mosque in Talaga village and a mosque in Parabon village, Cianjur, West Java on August 1, 2008.

The Ahmadiyya community of 182 individuals living in camps as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in West Lombok since their homes and mosques were attacked by a mob in 2006 continued to face challenges during the reporting period. On April 14, 2009, the local government requested that the IDPs cancel plans to return to their homes in Gegerungan Village due to continued security concerns and pending compensation issues. The April request followed an earlier series of requests in March that the Ahmadiyya delay their plans to return. So far, four families have returned to Gegerungan Village. They are reportedly living and working there safely, although sometimes they still face low level intimidation from the local community.

During the reporting period 125 Ahmadiyya IDPs remained in the Transito Camp and 57 in Praya Camp. In mid-2008 one family from the Praya Camp returned home briefly, only to return to the camp shortly thereafter due to threats of violence. Sources within the Ministry of Religion reported a lower number of 150 IDPs living in the camps, of which 80 had been repatriated back to their homes.

In 2007 the local government reduced the rice subsidy and stopped subsidizing the electricity supply for the IDP camp. At the end of the reporting period, IDPs in the shelter receive two tons of rice subsidies every month. The local government also reduced the water supply to the camp in 2008. Camp conditions remained difficult, with cramped living space and limited access to water. Although children have been able to attend local schools since 2006, they faced harassment. Ahmadiyyas who lived in the camps sometimes faced difficulties obtaining an ID card due to the absence of a clear address. However, those who lived in rented houses or took shelter in their family's houses did not have these problems. Ahmadiyya who lived in the camp also found it difficult to participate in the free health service program for the poor because they were not able to obtain a letter from local authorities verifying their economic status.

In February 2009 the provincial government in West Nusa Tenggara established a "Coordination Team" consisting of 17 members (religious leaders and academicians) to examine Ahmadiyya teaching and to discuss alternative solutions for the Ahmadiyya. The team offered two options: to relocate the Ahmadiyya into a heterogeneous area in Pemanang district in West Lombok, or to disperse them throughout city-owned land. Ahmadiyya representatives said that these two options were not acceptable and too complicated. Most city-owned land is in disputed areas and located in open green space.

During the reporting period, the Government arrested and charged individuals with heresy, blasphemy, and insulting Islam.

In June 2009 the Kupang District Police in East Nusa Tenggara arrested the leader of the Sion City of Allah sect and 12 of his followers for blasphemy. The sect was led by Nimbrot Lasbuan, a self-proclaimed prophet. The sect, whose teaching was based on the book of Jeremiah, banned its followers from joining church masses on Sunday. It also rejected the Holy Communion and wedding ceremonies conducted by the Timor Evangelical Church (GMIT) and forbade its female followers from wearing underwear while attending prayers.

On June 2, 2009, the Central Jakarta District Court found Lia Eden, the leader of the Jamaah Alamulla Group, guilty of blasphemy and incitement of hatred among religious adherents for proselytizing and delivering her messages to government institutions, including the Presidential Palace. Lia Eden was sentenced to two years and six months in prison. Eden's follower, Wahyu Wibisono was sentenced to two years in prison for writing Eden's religious concept.

Eden and 23 of her followers had been arrested in December 2008 on charges of blasphemy. This was the second time that Eden had been tried for blasphemy. She was arrested for the same crime in 2006, sentenced to two years in prison, and released in October 2007 after serving 16 months. In November 2007 the Supreme Court sentenced Abdul Rahman, Eden's son, who claimed to be the reincarnation of Prophet Muhammad, to three years in prison.

On May 2, 2008, the Padang District Court sentenced two local al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah sect activists, Dedi Priadi and Gerry Lufthi Yudistira, to three years in prison for blasphemy.

On April 23, 2008, the South Jakarta District Court sentenced al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah leader Ahmad Moshaddeq to four years in prison for blasphemy. The Court said Moshaddeq, who had claimed to be a prophet, was guilty of violating an article of the Criminal Code on hostility, misuse, and defamation against religion.

On April 5, 2008, police in Central Sulawesi shot and killed Madi, a fugitive sect leader involved in a 2005 clash that left five dead, including three police officers, when he forcefully resisted arrest. The 2005 clash broke out when police attempted to detain Madi for questioning regarding charges that Madi's teachings had created tension in society.

In November, 2007, Sidoarjo police arrested al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah's East Java leader Ari Cahyono. On the same day, 21 of the group's followers asked for protection by the East Java Police. The police allegedly declined and instead required them to provide a letter stating they would not spread their teachings to others. Those 21 persons repented in front of the East Java Police Chief and declared that they returned to Islam.

In October 2007 hundreds of persons raided the houses of three al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah followers in Gresik, East Java. Police subsequently detained the al-Qiyadah members on suspicion of blasphemy. The raid followed the Gresik Chapter of the MUI's issuance of an edict on October 6, 2007 stating that al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah is heretical, since it does not accept Muhammad as the last prophet or require prayer five times a day. By the end of October 2007, East Java Police arrested eight al-Qiyadah members on suspicion of blasphemy charges. They were released and the case was closed after they repented and agreed to return to Islam.

In September 2007 the Malang District Court sentenced 41 persons to five years in prison for blasphemy relating to dissemination of a "prayer training" video produced by the College Student Service Organization in Batu, East Java. Among other concerns, the video, distributed in early 2007, allegedly depicted 30 Christians being instructed by their leader to put Qur'ans on the floor. In August 2008 the 41 inmates received reprieves during the Indonesian Day Celebration.

In 2006 the Banyuwangi, East Java, regional legislature voted to oust Banyuwangi's Regent, Ratna Ani Lestari, from office. Those in favor of the ouster accused Ratna, a Muslim by birth, of blaspheming Islam by practicing a different religion from the one stated on her identity card. Ratna's supporters stated that she was the target of a religiously motivated smear campaign. Ratna stayed in office throughout the reporting period, because the regional legislature failed to submit a petition for her dismissal to the Supreme Court. During the reporting period, protests against her administration focused not on her religious background but her policies. Protest against her administration continued during the reporting period due to her policies and her alleged involvement in a corruption case.

According to confirmed reports, extremist groups used violence and intimidation to close at least nine churches during the reporting period. Groups also delayed and in some cases blocked petitions for churches to complete renovations. Small churches in West Java were under the most pressure, including in areas of Bandung, Tangerang, and Bekasi. At least six of the nine churches known to have closed did so due to pressure from local officials, while the remaining three churches closed due to pressure from the local community. While often present, police rarely acted to prevent forced church closings and in previous reporting periods had sometimes assisted in the closure.

During the reporting period, the Shari'a court in Aceh reported a total of 36 canings, all of which were for gambling. Unlike in other Southeast Asian countries, canings in Aceh are not administered to bare skin. Persons subject to caning in Aceh are fully clothed – sometimes with several layers of clothes. There are also regulations effectively limiting the amount of force which may be applied during a caning. Acehnese canings do not break the skin.

Despite police presence, municipal public order officers ransacked food stalls and coffee shops that operated during daylight hours during Ramadan in Pekanbaru, Riau. The city administration in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, also raided and arrested food stall vendors. These detained vendors were reportedly fined \$55 (500,000 rupiah) each or they faced three months' detention.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or who had not been allowed to return to the United States.

Abuses by Rebel or Foreign Forces or Terrorist Organizations

There were no abuses by terrorist organizations during the reporting period. The Government made progress on prosecutions of individuals for acts of interreligious violence under the antiterrorism law and related charges for incidents in Central Sulawesi and Ambon between 2004 and 2006.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On October 30, 2008, the leader of the Islam Defenders Front (FPI), Rizieq Shihab, and the leader of the Islam Troop Command (KLI), Munarman, were sentenced to 18 months in prison, including time served, for their roles in leading attacks on members of the National Alliance for Religious Freedom (AKKBB) on June 1, 2008. The AKKBB was holding a rally in support of religious freedom, pluralism, and tolerance at the National Monument (Monas) square. FPI and KLI members believed the rally was intended as a show of support for the Ahmadiyya. FPI and KLI attacked protesters, including women and children, with sticks and stones, leaving an estimated 70 persons injured. After serving nine months of their 18 month sentence, both Rizieq Shihab and Munarman were released in July 2009 based on good behavior.

Representatives of the Confucian community confirmed their ability to practice their religion as well as obtain marriage certificates and identity cards with Confucianism listed as their religion. On September 1, 2008, the National Education Ministry issued two regulations legalizing the incorporation of the Confucian teachings into school curricula. Also during the reporting period, the Government granted a plot of land at the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah theme park to establish a Confucian temple. Confucianism was recognized as an official religion by the Government in 2006.

Local government officials in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) demonstrated a willingness to acknowledge the marriages of Ahmadiyya followers. Officials from the NTB Department of Religion went to the Ahmadiyya Transito Camp to marry Ahmadiyya couples, and to record and issue marriage certificates. Unlike previous years, it was difficult for the Ahmadiyya followers to marry as there were no local officials willing to either perform or register the marriage.

Despite new incidents of violence during the reporting period, leaders of both the Muslim and Christian communities and the Maluku provincial government continued to demonstrate their commitment to easing religious tension and to rebuild the community.

The Maluku Governor, Pattimura Military Commander, Maluku Police Chief, MUI chairman, and the head of the

Maluku Synod visited Masohi for a dialog with social leaders, religious leaders, and youth leaders following a riot in Masohi in December 2008. The riot started after an elementary teacher allegedly made a comment insulting Islam. Reverend John Ruhulestin, the chairman of the Maluku Synod, announced that if the blasphemy allegation is true, he apologized on behalf of all Christians in Maluku.

During the reporting period, the Maluku Police Chief visited mosques and churches to promote community reconciliation among Muslim and Christian communities. Several government projects to replace damaged churches, mosques, and homes continued during the reporting period. The local government implemented economic recovery and conflict rehabilitation programs using a \$300 million (2.3 trillion rupiah) presidential allocation. The Maluku government took steps to strengthen coordination with civil society around social problems arising from local conflict and terrorist violence during the reporting period.

As in the previous reporting period, there were no major incidents of violence in Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi. Police cracked down on and arrested several suspects accused of terrorism and other violent crimes related to interreligious strife in Central Sulawesi during previous reporting periods. Local police in Central Sulawesi protected local churches and prayer houses during religious services. Local residents expressed optimism that the cycle of violence has slowed.

Citizens and religious leaders in Central Sulawesi continued to promote peace and religious harmony in the province. On April 7, 2009, thousands of people from different religions conducted mass prayer in front of Governor's office in Palu and committed to promote peace in Central Sulawesi.

During the reporting period, the Government successfully tried and convicted 13 suspects of terrorism, including individuals on the U.S. Department of State's terrorist watch list. Four of those tried and convicted on terrorism charges were affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The remainder of those convicted had started their own terrorist cell, affiliated with JI only through the group's leader, in Palembang, South Sumatra.

On April 28, 2009, Singaporean Muhammad Hasan, a.k.a. Fajar Taslim, was convicted of terrorism and sentenced to 18 years in prison. Taslim received training in Afghanistan and had a close relationship with Singaporean JI leader Mas Selamat Kastari and the late bomb-maker Azahari. Taslim had incited the rest of the Palembang group to plan terrorist activities. In the same trial, Ali Mashudi, a.k.a. Zuber, and Wahyudi, a.k.a. Yudi, were sentenced to 10 and 12 years respectively for their roles in the Palembang group's terrorist activities.

On April 21, 2009, Abdurahman Taib and Ki Agus Muhammad Toni were sentenced to 12 years in prison for the killing of Christian teacher Dago Simamora in Palembang in 2007 and planning a number of terror attacks. Both Taib and Toni are members of the Palembang terrorist cell. In a separate trial, Anis Sugandi and Sukarso Abdillah were found guilty of harboring the other members of the Palembang group. Sugandi and Abdillah were sentenced to five and four years, respectively.

On April 7, 2009, three members of the Palembang terrorist cell were convicted of terrorism. Sugiarto, alias Sugicheng, alias Raja; Agustiawarman, alias Abu Taskid; and Heri Purwanto, alias Abu Hurairoh, were each sentenced to 12 years in jail for violating the antiterrorism law. They were found guilty of assembling a bomb and planning an attack on a bar in Western Sumatra.

On February 9, 2009, three JI terrorists, Parmin, alias Yaser Abdul Baar, Agus Purwanto, and Abdurrahim bin Thotib, alias Abu Husna, were convicted in the Central Jakarta District Court. Husna, the head of education for JI, was sentenced to nine years in prison. Purwanto and Parmin were each sentenced to eight years in prison for aiding and abetting JI operatives.

Trials were still in process for ten suspected terrorists who were arrested on July 1, 2008 in Palembang, South Sumatra for allegedly plotting an attack on a bar frequented by non-Muslims in a resort town on the island of Sumatra. The men, linked through their membership in the local Forum Against Apostasy or FAKTA group, allegedly called off the attack after realizing that Muslims might be killed. Members of the Palembang cell were loosely affiliated to JI through Muhammad Husan, aka Fajar Taslim, a former JI operative. The group was accused of killing an Indonesian Christian teacher in 2007 and attempting to kill a Catholic priest in 2005. When the group was brought to trial, they were separated based on the severity of their crimes into four cases, which were being tried concurrently.

Police reportedly negotiated with hardline groups in some areas, resulting in less tense situations during Ramadan. Despite these efforts, however, in several cases they failed to prevent closures and attacks. Police arrested several members of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) in many instances and in various places across the country that planned vigilante "raiding" of entertainment establishments during Ramadan. This represented an improvement from previous years when police did not do so.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were numerous reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Controversy over the Ahmadiyya continued throughout the reporting period. Hardline groups renewed attacks on the minority group.

Hardline religious groups demanded the Government act quickly to disband the Ahmadiyya and threatened to do so independently if the Government failed to act. Various rallies took place throughout the country both for and against a ban. Civil rights activists, members of the Presidential Advisory Council, and some leaders from Muhammadiyah and Nadhlatul Ulama spoke out claiming such a ban would be unconstitutional and contrary to the principles of Islam. Groups such as FUI, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, and FPI threatened senior NU clerics in Cirebon West Java who opposed banning Ahmadiyya. According to media reports and Ahmadiyya sources, after the June 2008 decree, hardline groups in some areas vandalized or closed 20 Ahmadiyya mosques. Women's groups reported continued discrimination against Ahmadiyya women and children whose schools were forced to close.

In August 2008 fifty FPI members rallied in front of East Java DPRD, protesting Ahmadiyya. Eighteen FPI representatives received by East Java DPRD demanded the President issue a Presidential Decree and that the East Java Parliament issue a local regulation (Perda) banning Ahmadiyya teaching because the teaching is in violation of and insulting to Islam.

In addition to the Ahmadiyya, there were also incidents involving Christian groups.

According to press reports, a Catholic politician was threatened and his house stoned by individuals claiming that he should convert to Islam if he wanted to assume his elected seat in the district legislature. The victim later reported that this was the only incident and that the police, other political parties, and local government were very supportive. The victim also believed the incident was triggered by disappointment over another candidate's loss and not religious bias.

According to the Indonesian Communion of Churches and the Wahid Institute, local government officials and local communities forced the closing of at least nine licensed and unlicensed churches across the country during the reporting period. Many of the targeted churches operated in private homes and storefronts, and some churches moved their services to rented spaces in public shopping malls to avoid threats from hardline groups.

In August 2008 the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia at Pondok Rangon, East Jakarta, was forced to stop services by local residents who vandalized the church. The protesters demanded the church close because it did not have a permit. Police were quickly at the scene to prevent further damage but did not make any arrests. Afraid to resume, the church stopped holding services.

In August 2008 dozens of people demanded that the Tangerang regional government and the Christian community of Pamulang cancel plans to build the Barnabas Church, citing the relatively small Christian population. However, during the reporting period, the regional government issued a building permit and church construction was nearly complete.

In July 2008 the Arastamar Evangelical School of Theology (SETIA) was attacked by residents in Kampung Pulo, West Jakarta, after a student was accused of stealing from a resident's home. During the attack more than 20 students were injured. In response to the violence, local authorities immediately relocated more than 1,200 SETIA students who were boarding at the school. The school is currently operating out of three separate locations, creating challenges for holding integrated classes. Conditions in some of the locations are poor and unhygienic. The students have not been allowed to return to their campus to reoccupy the school or to collect reading materials, desks, beds and other belongings, despite the property legally belonging to the school since 1987. Local police in Kampung Pulo say this is because they cannot protect the students or school administrators from further violence. The school is currently looking for a new campus.

In July 2008 municipal police, under an order from the subdistrict head, demolished the Indonesian Evangelical Prophet Church (Gekindo) in Jatimulya, Tambun Selatan, Bekasi, West Java. The church had not been operating for the past two years pending license from the local government.

Several houses of worship, religious schools, and homes of Muslim groups regarded as unorthodox were attacked, vandalized, forced to shut down, or prevented from being established by militant groups and mobs throughout the country. In several cases police temporarily detained members of "deviant groups" who were victims of attacks, ostensibly to ensure their safety, but did not arrest attackers.

In April, 2008, in response to *Fitna*, a film critical of the Qur'an and produced by Dutch opposition parliamentarian Geert Wilders, 50 students from the Indonesian Muslim Student Association attacked the Medan office of the Dutch honorary consul in protest. At the end of the reporting period, eight of the students, who had been sentenced to eight months in prison, were released for time served.

Muslims sometimes reported difficulties in establishing mosques in Muslim-minority areas of Papua, North Sulawesi, and elsewhere.

On January 14, 2009, dozens of people destroyed a small family-owned mosque under construction in Sumberduren village of Blitar Regency (East Java). The perpetrators argued that the mosque did not have a permit. Prior to the January incident, the Blitar Regent issued a letter asking the mosque's builders to stop construction due to unclear land ownership status.

Hardline religious groups used pressure, intimidation, or violence against those whose messages they found offensive. Militants purporting to uphold public morality sometimes attacked cafes and nightclubs they considered venues for prostitution or that had not made payments to extremist groups, although the number of such incidents decreased compared to previous years.

Unforced conversions between religious groups occurred, as allowed by law, but they remained a source of controversy. Some Muslims accused Christian missionaries of using food and microcredit programs to lure poor

Muslims to convert. Some converts felt compelled not to publicize their conversions for family and social reasons.

During the reporting period, the West Sumatra MUI continued to urge Muslims to refrain from celebrating Valentine's Day because it undermined the country's culture and values.

Fighting between villages in Maluku continued during the reporting period. On April 15, 2009 residents and religious leaders from the conflict-impacted village of Kailolo met with the local police chief to hand over their homemade weapons, bombs, and ammunition as an effort to foster social peace.

On February 26, 2009, the Masohi District Court of Maluku began trials for three suspects charged with blasphemy, inciting riot and house burning during a December 2008 mob incident. The incident involved 300 persons who burned down two churches and dozens of homes belonging to both Christians and Muslims. The mob alleged that a Christian teacher at a local primary school made insulting remarks to her students about Islam and Muhammad. The three suspects, including the coordinator of the Central Maluku Islamic Communication Forum, were charged with provoking the attacks and circulating inflammatory pamphlets.

On January 7, 2009, 100 Muslims demonstrated in front of a synagogue in Surabaya protesting the Israeli attacks in Gaza. Some protesters carried signs with anti-Semitic references. Police forced back the protesters, who tried to enter the synagogue. There were no injuries or damage.

Sabili, a widely read Islamic magazine, continued to publish articles with anti-Semitic statements and themes, and it alleged the existence of conspiratorial "Zionist" activities in the country.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, consulate general in Surabaya, and consulate in Medan regularly engaged Government officials on specific religious freedom issues, and also encouraged officials from other missions to discuss the subject with the Government. Embassy staff at all levels met frequently with religious leaders, officials of Islamic social organizations, and human rights advocates to clarify U.S. policy in support of religious freedom, discuss religious tolerance, and promote respect for religious freedom. Embassy staff also met with members of minority religious groups, whose houses of worship were forcefully closed, to discuss religious freedom and pluralism.

Embassy and consulate outreach to the public emphasized the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a democratic and diverse society. The Embassy and consulates also promoted pluralism and tolerance through exchanges and civil society programs.

During the reporting period, two short-term programs sponsored by the U.S. Government that incorporated discussions of religious freedom, pluralism, and tolerance in the United States and Indonesia brought a total of 63 Indonesians to the United States. The programs allowed participants to engage in dialogue with U.S. counterparts about the integral roles of religious pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and multiculturalism in a democratic society, to promote the concept of religious freedom in the country. One exchange program offered 45 Indonesian Islamic boarding school (pesantren) educators the opportunity to shadow teachers in 12 schools throughout the United States and give presentations to American students about Indonesia. Participants examined U.S. democracy as well as religious freedom, civic involvement, and religious education in schools, and related those issues to U.S. and Indonesian society. Furthering the program, upon their return to Indonesia the pesantren educators continued

dialogue via on-line blogs and e-mail communication connecting both students and educators.

Another exchange program brought 15 American high school teachers together with 17 Indonesian teachers to build a curriculum unit that promotes interfaith dialogue, cultural understanding, and democratic values to build tolerance among various communities. The Americans visited a wide variety of local leaders, teachers, and students, representing the country's major religious groups, in Yogyakarta, Makassar, Balikpapan, and Jakarta. The Indonesian teachers traveled to the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute to work alongside the Americans in creating this unit of curriculum to be used in American and Indonesian schools.

The Embassy and consulates reached a broad population during the reporting period through the production of media programs that provided in-depth coverage of issues, including religious freedom, from a U.S. perspective. These included several television co-op productions, which aired on major free-to-air Indonesian television stations.

The Embassy and consulates also supported campus seminar programs aimed at strengthening supporters of pluralism on Islamic campuses, and reinforcing an understanding of religious freedom, tolerance, pluralism, and gender equity. Five American religious scholars visited Indonesia on an exchange program and held public discussions on several campuses in Jakarta, Lombok, and Malang in cooperation with state Islamic universities and public universities. More than 1,500 students from a wide range of backgrounds participated in the discussions.

In October 2008 USAID signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Commission on Human Rights. Under this MOU, which will run through July 2010, the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) agreed to provide training and technical assistance to selected provincial and district government officials to improve their understanding and implementation of national law protecting freedom of religion.

The U.S. State Department funded a summer institute for university faculty and education practitioners on religious pluralism, democracy, and culture in the United States.